

Leticia D. Astacio

Candidate for Rochester City Council

Northwest District

- Name one issue on which you disagree with the current administration and why.

I believe Rochester police officers should have residency requirements. I believe the relationship between the community and the police is paramount in ending violent crime and improving the quality of life for residents of the City of Rochester. Currently, police officers are not required to live in the city, meaning they often are only familiar with the individuals they are interacting with through criminal history reports and/or prior arrest. Officers are often perceived as bullies as opposed to allies, making it impossible to form the trusting relationships required to take back our communities. Additionally, just knowing a police officer lives in the neighborhood will actively serve as a deterrent to crime. *(editor's note: State law exempts police from the city's residency requirement, but some cities have negotiated residency into union contracts)*

- What is the most important issue facing your district, and what is a specific proposal or action you propose to address it?

Violent crime is the most important issue facing my district. Residents that don't feel safe can only focus on survival. In addition to the residency requirements, I believe we need to be proactive about prevention. This will come from strengthening the sense of community through a resurgence of block clubs and neighborhood groups. Encouraging and supporting the involvement of community members in policing themselves while rebuilding the community's relationship with the police will dramatically improve the quality of life for the residents.

- Please identify one area in the city budget where you think the city should commit more resources than is currently proposed and why.

I think the city needs to pour all available resources into significantly reducing violent crime. Rather than trying to entice outsiders to come to Rochester, we need to do everything in our power to improve the quality of living for the current residents. Safety is a primal concern that is essential to the mental health and wellbeing of community members. It is the foundation upon which the other community work must be built.

- What policies would you pursue to address housing affordability, evictions and/or landlord-tenant relations in your district?

With many areas in the city getting a facelift, I will work to ensure my entire district is considered as opposed to certain portions of the district that seemingly get the most attention. Additionally, I will strive to assist with disseminating information regarding available grants and housing opportunities. I also would like to expand some of the programs the city already has to encourage and promote home ownership.

- Will you vote for the Police Accountability Board as proposed in November – why or why not?

While I have skimmed the proposals, read many pieces about the board, and even seen meetings I cannot honestly answer that question. I have not done enough research to make that decision. I can say one major concern of law enforcement and union leaders was there was no person with adequate legal knowledge on city council to judge the propriety of their actions. Voting for me alleviates that concern.

- Do you support Mayor Warren's push for a referendum calling for removal of the elected school board in favor of a state takeover of RCSD/appointed board, and why?

I fully support allowing voters to make decisions regarding the majority of the decisions of how the city is run. My understanding is the mayor has proposed a solution and she wants to allow the voters to approve or reject the current plan. I firmly support allowing the voters directly affected to be their own advocates as opposed to appointing others to speak for them.

- What current policy or practice of city government would you seek to change if (re)elected, and why?

I think it's imperative that the people participate in government. I believe we should allow residents to vote on proposals as opposed to making decisions for them. Empowering individuals to implement what they believe is best for their neighborhood fosters a sense of ownership and pride. In addition, this will give residents an opportunity to see that their vote matters and they have the power to make the changes they want to see.